

October 22, 1960

Professor Archie Cox
Harvard Law School
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Mr. Cox:

Further on the Space issue in Senator Kennedy's campaign.

It may lend color to the charges of exaggeration and denigration to overstate the nature of the Russian advantage. I believe the Senator did begin to do this in his last TV debate. Rocket thrust is technology, not science -- perhaps we should feel even more mortified to be challenged in this. By any reasonable criterion we have already done far more in space science than have the Russians, notwithstanding the brute force accomplishments that have dominated the attention of the world. Perhaps the issue I am raising is too subtle to be appropriate for the campaign; I hope that President Kennedy will be perceptive of it.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

P.S. The Church-State flareup in Porto Rico can do Kennedy no good at all. I am not so concerned about the Bible Belt where it will not be easy to make a reasoned impact on the religious issue in any case. But in this state, the "Vote No For President" among erstwhile pro-Stevensonites may cut into the liberal vote that ought to go for Kennedy, and I suspect this movement has some subconscious basis in anti-Catholic attitudes.

What is so disturbing about the P.R. business is that it should have grown out of the birth-control issue, and that the bishops should have implied (according to local newspaper accounts) that they had an "obligation to prohibit Catholics from giving their votes to a party..." Needless to say, few non-Catholics would vote for a presidential candidate who was liable to such a prohibition. Early in the campaign I had urged some forethought on how to ~~in~~ deal with such an exacerbation, but I had expected the opposition rather than the Church to have provoked it. You will hardly have neglected to forearm yourselves, and this remark must be just one of the many on which you can judge the best advice. The last few days before Nov. 8 will certainly be the most critical.